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SUBJECT: NIGERIA AVIAN FLU LABORATORY ASSESSMENT

REF: ABUJA 1429

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11. (SBU) Summary. Two veterinarians from the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit in Cairo assessed in May five Nigerian laboratories' capabilities for detecting AI. The laboratories generally were deficient in infrastructure, equipment, and technicians' level of training. The capability of the Asokoro human-testing laboratory was strong, but the lab had not received many human samples. The NVRI animal-testing laboratory was capable and functioning. All the veterinary laboratories lacked a standardized collection and transportation system featuring uniform shipping containers to properly ship AI animal samples. End summary.

12. Two veterinarians from the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU) in Cairo, Egypt, assessed in May five Nigerian laboratories' capabilities for detecting avian influenza (AI). The zoonotic-disease diagnostic experts visited and assessed: the Department of Virology, College of Medicine, University College Hospital, Ibadan; the Institute of Human Virology, Asokoro, Abuja; the National Veterinary Research Institute (NVRI), Vom, Plateau State; the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, Amadu Bello University, Zaria; and the Avian Diseases Laboratory, Department of Veterinary Medicine, Ibadan.

13. The experts found the Nigerian lab staff to be committed but without adequate equipment or infrastructure. The NAMRU veterinarians found all the laboratories except for the NVRI lacked a reliable supply of electrical power; all needed new generators and money for generator diesel fuel; and the Ibadan Department of Virology and the Amadu Bello Veterinary Teaching Hospital lacked running water.

14. All the facilities lacked regular equipment maintenance, especially of biosafety cabinets; trained personnel with the tools to maintain equipment; and laboratory personnel trained sufficiently in using and caring for laboratory equipment. All the laboratories (except Asokoro) lacked refrigerators; all (except Asokoro) lacked freezers capable of minus 20 degrees Celsius for storing reagents; all (except Asokoro) lacked freezers capable of minus 80 degree

Celsius for storing samples; all (except Asokoro) lacked batteries and stabilizers for equipment; and all lacked access to dry ice or liquid nitrogen. None of laboratories had funds for a constant supply of reagents, personal protective equipment, kits for sample collection, shipping materials, or to ship samples.

15. The capability of personnel at the Asokoro laboratory was strong, and they can test human samples but have not received many. Overall, the NVRI was capable and functioning, and had a reliable (but aging) backup generator for electricity, as well as water-storage capabilities. The NVRI processes Nigeria's animal AI lab samples and is capable of expanding its operations if necessary. The NVRI would benefit from receiving an additional minus 80 degree Celsius freezer to store reference samples. The AI animal samples currently being submitted in Nigeria all can be processed by the NVRI, with an outside lab serving as a reference laboratory.

16. Other than the animal lab unit in Ibadan, the capability of the veterinary labs was weak. Their challenges in maintaining electricity and water greatly limit their capacity to conduct laboratory analysis. The satellite laboratories needed assistance with both materiel and training to collect and to ship samples to the national lab in Vom. None of the veterinary laboratories had a standardized collection and transportation system featuring uniform shipping containers, to properly ship AI animal samples to the NVRI. This system needs to deliver properly collected and packaged lab samples to the NVRI within 48 hours of their being collected from the suspect animal.

18. The experts experienced a positive reception at each laboratory they visited and left laboratory reagents at

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each. The NAMRU plans to cooperate with these facilities in the near future to improve their capabilities.
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